



City of Durham Human Relations Commission Chair's Annual Report to Durham City Council

May 5, 2011

Prepared for:

Mayor William V. 'Bill' Bell, Mayor Pro-Tem Cora Cole-McFadden, Councilwoman Diane N. Catotti, Councilman J. Michael Woodard, Councilman Howard Clement, III, Councilman Eugene A. Brown, Councilman Farad Ali, and City Manager Tom Bonfield

Prepared by:

Nathaniel H. Goetz, Chair
City of Durham Human Relations Commission

It is with pleasure that I submit my annual report to you on behalf of the City of Durham Human Relations Commission that highlights the activities engaged in during the period of June 2010-May 2011. I hope you find it both informative and a clear demonstration of the continued progress that the Commission is making in our city. Thank you for your continued support of the Commission and our activities in helping to uphold human relations for all.

Strategic Planning, 2010-11

Beginning in early 2010, the Commission began an extensive, year-long strategic planning process, which includes the goal of revising and streamlining our rules and procedures and defining our purpose and mission. Such a process had not been undertaken in over a decade and it was found that many inconsistencies existed as well as questions as to what the Commission's purpose and function is. The Rules and Procedures Sub-Committee, chaired by Commissioner Scott Bryant-Comstock, worked very hard, spending long hours outside of its regular monthly meeting time making proposed changes and revisions, which were then presented to the Commission for approval. Commissioners also worked with the City Attorney to ensure that all changes aligned with City Ordinances. The final version of the Commission's new rules and procedures were approved unanimously at its February 2011 meeting.

Following approval of its new rules and procedures, the Commission began the second phase of its strategic planning to define its purpose and mission. Like that of its rules and procedures, it was decided that the Commission did not have a clearly defined role, instead it operated with many different (and sometimes conflicting goals) that were added upon it by previous commissions over the years. This only served to create confusion. This Commission plans to complete this work by the end of 2011.

"The City of Durham Human Relations Commission Motion Recommending The Durham City Council Suspend All City Travel And Business With Arizona Until Arizona Bill SB1070 Is Repealed", May 4, 2010

At its May 2010 regular meeting, the Commission unanimously passed the above-mentioned motion, made by Commissioner Steven Lee and seconded by Commissioner Alba Onofrio. It was signed by Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz on May 4, 2010 and forwarded to City Council for consideration. During May and June, the Commission worked hard to unify and organize many stakeholders around this issue. Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz wrote two op-eds for the Herald-Sun and the Durham News, as well as appeared on Fox 11 News, and Commissioner Alba Onofrio appeared on North Carolina Public Radio WUNC's, "The State of Things," to discuss the ban. The Commission was very pleased with the final outcome and applauds City Council for its courageous and progressive action in the name of human rights.

National Night Out, August 2010

The Commission was a partner in the 2010 National Night Out and Commissioners attended many of the events throughout the city that evening.

Durham Unstalled, September 7, 2010

At its September 2010 regular meeting, the Commission approved a motion made by Commissioner Alba Onofrio and seconded by Commissioner Will Elliott supporting the work of Durham Unstalled, a grassroots movement with the goals of: Raising awareness about bathroom accessibility issues, Working with establishments in Durham to re-designate single-stall, gendered bathrooms as unisex or family bathrooms, Using signage to let people know which businesses and organizations are committed to safe and welcoming bathrooms in their establishments, Expanding the visibility of unisex bathrooms in Durham via the Internet, Encouraging community members to spend their resources in establishments that are committed to having accessible bathrooms. The motion read, “The City of Durham Human Relations Commission affirms the right of every person to a safe and comfortable place to use the bathroom. The Human Relations Commission supports the efforts of Durham Unstalled, local businesses and community partners in making Durham’s bathrooms more accessible and welcoming to all residents and visitors.”

10th Annual Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony in Honor of Murdered Domestic Violence Victims Across North Carolina, December 16, 2010

On December 16, the Commission joined the Human Relations Department in honoring the 86 victims of domestic violence who were murdered during 2010 in North Carolina. The tree lighting and ceremony took place in Council Chambers at City Hall. The keynote speaker was Jocelyn Bullock, mother of 2009 domestic violence homicide victims, Mylin Tierra Bullock. Commissioner Charmey Joy Morgan, who sits on the Mayor’s Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Rape Task Force, participated in reading the names of each victim. Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz spoke about the impact of domestic violence upon children, sharing the story of his adopted son’s birthmother.

“A Proclamation Regarding The Hillside High School Football Team’s 2011 State Championship Victory & Its Positive Impact On The City of Durham”, January 4, 2011

At its regular January 2011 meeting, the Commission honored the Hillside High School Football Team with the above-mentioned proclamation and later held a reception in its honor at City Hall. The proclamation was introduced by Vice Chair Melessia Cozart, Vice Chair and Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz and passed unanimously.



Photo Credit: Parul Patel

“A Resolution Commemorating the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through Encouraging Community Service In The City Of Durham On Monday, January 17, 2011”, January 4, 2011

At its regular January 2011 meeting, the Commission honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the above-mentioned resolution, which, upon its passage, was sent to his estate in Atlanta, Georgia. It encouraged the City to engage in community service on the federal holiday named in his honor on January 17, 2011. The resolution was introduced by Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz and Commissioner Charmey Joy Morgan and passed unanimously.

Hayti Film Festival “Waiting for Superman” Panel, February 17, 2011

On February 17, 2011, Chairman Nathaniel H. Goetz was an invited guest and panelist discussing the implications for Durham of the acclaimed documentary, “Waiting for Superman,” following a screening at the Hayti Film Festival.



Photo Credit: TYPE Media, Inc.

City of Durham Human Relations Awards, February 24, 2011

On Thursday, February 24, 2011, the City of Durham Human Relations Commission and Department held its annual Human Relations Awards ceremony. The Commission honored Andrea Bazan, president of Triangle Community Foundation, with the Human Relations Chairman’s Award and Michael Barros, director of the City of Durham Community Development Department with the Fair Housing Award.



Photo Credit: Parul Patel

“A Unofficial Motion For The City Of Durham Human Relations Commission To Accept The “Wedding Proposal” Of Marry Durham”, March 1, 2011

At its regular March 2011 meeting, following a “proposal” by Marry Durham’s May Alexander and Crystal Dreisbach, the Commission moved unanimously to, “Accept the wedding proposal by Marry Durham and in doing so “put a ring on it” on March 19, 2011.” Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz and Commissioner James Hill represented the Commission at the “wedding” on March 19.

Strengthening Equal Access to Housing, March 2011

In early 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a proposed rule change that seeks to strengthen equal access to housing in HUD programs

regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This action is based upon evidence that “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families are being arbitrarily excluded from some housing opportunities in the private sector.” The proposal made by HUD sought the input of interested persons that will help guide and inform the final rule change and HUD policy toward ensuring decent housing and a suitable living environment for all. The Commission solicited feedback from stakeholders throughout Durham and submitted a letter supporting this proposed rule to HUD on March 25, 2011.

Respectfully submitted this 5th day of May 2011 by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Goetz', enclosed within a circular stamp or seal.

Nathaniel H. Goetz, Chair
City of Durham Human Relations Commission

Appendix 1: Human Relations Commission Sub-Committees, 2010-11

Human Relations Commission Executive Committee

Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz

Vice Chair Lisa Cozart

Commissioner James Hill, Immediate Past Chair

Commissioner Scott Bryant-Comstock, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner Joy Morgan, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner Steven Lee, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner Alba Onofrio, Chair's Appointee

Commissioner Ryan Urquhart, Chair's Appointee

Rules and Procedures Review Sub-Committee

Commissioner Scott Bryant-Comstock, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner James Daniels

Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz

Vice Chair Lisa Cozart

Commissioner Steven Lee

City of Durham Board and Commission Composition Review Sub-Committee

Commissioner Scott Bryant-Comstock, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner Alba Onofrio

Vice Chair Lisa Cozart

Human Relations Commission Awards Sub-Committee

Commissioner Joy Morgan, Sub-Committee Chair

Commissioner Alba Onofrio

Expanding Protected Classes Sub-Committee

Commissioner Steven Lee, Sub-Committee Chair

Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz

Appendix 2: Text of the May 4, 2010 Human Relations Commission motion for Arizona business and travel ban

“The City of Durham Human Relations Commission Recommends that the Durham City Council suspend all city travel and business with Arizona until Arizona Bill SB1070 is repealed.”

Motion made by Commissioner Steven Lee, seconded by Commissioner Alba Onfrio and unanimously approved by the City of Durham Human Relations Commission on 4th day of May 2010.

Signed by Nathaniel H. Goetz, Chair, City of Durham Human Relations Commission, 4th day of May 2010.

Appendix 3: Text of the September 7, 2010 City of Durham Human Relations Commission motion supporting Durham Unstalled

“The City of Durham Human Relations Commission affirms the right of every person to a safe and comfortable place to use the bathroom. The Human Relations Commission supports the efforts of Durham Unstalled, local businesses and community partners in making Durham’s bathrooms more accessible and welcoming to all residents and visitors.”

Motion made by Commissioner Alba Onfrio and seconded by Commissioner Will Elliott and unanimously approved by the City of Durham Human Relations Commission on 7th day of September 2010.

Signed by Nathaniel H. Goetz, Chair, City of Durham Human Relations Commission, 7th day of September 2010.

Appendix 4: Text of, “A Proclamation Regarding The Hillside High School Football Team’s 2011 State Championship Victory & Its Positive Impact On The City of Durham”, January 4, 2011

WHEREAS, Hillside High School has been a pillar of strength and achievement in the African American community of Durham since its founding well over a century ago as the James A. Whitted School; and

WHEREAS, Hillside High School continues to successfully, under the careful direction of Principal Hans Lassiter, build upon its proud history and is a beacon of civic pride, leadership and unity for all who call Durham home; and

WHEREAS, on December 11, 2010, the Hillside High School Mighty Hornets Football Team won the North Carolina State Championship, completing an undefeated and untied season; and

WHEREAS, Hillside High School coach and alumnus, Antonio King and his dedicated coaching staff, led the team’s 63 players to victory in the State Championship; and

WHEREAS, Hillside High School’s players received top honors for their individual achievements, including: Ronald “Big Red” Thompson (#60) as Most Valuable Defensive Player, Jamaal Williams (#32) as Most Valuable Offensive Player and Vad Lee (#2) as Most Outstanding Performer of the Game; and

WHEREAS, the impact of Hillside High School’s victory has been a bolstering of both school and community-wide pride; and

WHEREAS, Hillside High School’s victory is a resounding testament of community leadership, courage and the pursuit of positive human relations throughout the Durham community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the City of Durham Human Relations Commission recognizes and congratulates the Hillside High School Football Team, its coaching staff and principal for its efforts to further positive human relations both on campus and throughout our great community.

Appendix 5: Text of, “A Resolution Commemorating the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through Encouraging Community Service In The City Of Durham On Monday, January 17, 2011”, January 4, 2011

WHEREAS, the City of Durham, along with the rest of the nation, will commemorate the birthday of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Monday, January 17, 2011 as a federal holiday; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is widely recognized in the City of Durham and across the country as a day of community service, known as “a day on, not a day off;” and,

WHEREAS, the relationship between the City of Durham and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is of rich historical significance to the national struggle for civil rights by African Americans; and,

WHEREAS, African American high school and college students bravely and with resolve in their hearts became the first to conduct a sit-in protest in the City of Durham at the Royal Ice Cream Parlor in 1957, nearly four years before a similar event in Greensboro garnered national attention; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., following this act of non-violent protest, began regularly visiting and supporting the African American City of Durham, encouraging local student involvement and participation in the civil rights movement; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered what civil rights historians consider one of his most significant speeches at White Rock Baptist Church in the City of Durham on February 16, 1960 in which he signified his firm support for the future role of students in the Civil Rights Movement; and,

WHEREAS, excerpts from the speech given by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. state, “May I say to you as you continue your protest, you will confront moments of difficulty. But let us realize that no great and lasting gain comes in history without suffering and sacrifice. May I also urge you to continue the struggle on the highest level of dignity. You have rightly chosen to follow the path of non-violence. Let us protest with the ultimate aim of being reconciled with our white brothers;” and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s profound words and acts of encouragement and support for students’ role in both the City of Durham and throughout the nation during the struggle for civil rights resonates in his larger vision for humanity, where communities honor, celebrate and respect their differences and work together in harmony and in service to one another.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the City of Durham Human Relations Commission celebrates and commemorates Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on Monday, January 17, 2011; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT, the City of Durham Human Relations Commission actively encourages the public to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in service to their community on Monday, January 17, 2011.

Appendix 6: Text of, “A Unofficial Motion For The City Of Durham Human Relations Commission To Accept The “Wedding Proposal” Of Marry Durham”, March 1, 2011

“I move that the City of Durham accept the wedding proposal by Marry Durham and, in doing so, “put a ring on it” on March 19, 2011.”

Sponsor: Chair Nathaniel H. Goetz

Appendix 7: Text of the Human Relations Commission letter supporting equal access to housing mailed to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on March 25, 2011.

Dear United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

The City of Durham Human Relations Commission would like to strongly endorse HUD's proposed rule to provide equal access to housing in HUD programs, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Our commission believes in the inherent dignity and self-worth of all members of our community regardless of their respective identities. It is our strong belief that the recipients of public funds should similarly be held to such standards. There is a growing sentiment -especially among the next generation of Americans- that one's sexual orientation or gender identity should play no role in determining the rights or privileges one is afforded nor the way they are treated. The commission feels this proposed rule is a natural progression of HUD's previous efforts to 'create strong, sustainable, *inclusive* communities...' (Emphasis added) and is inevitable given the direction of the country.

Though individuals and groups may certainly disagree about the merits of sexual orientation or gender identity, this proposed rule does not unfairly impose on individuals a particular ideology nor should it be thought of as endorsing one. Instead the proposed rule merely requires HUD programs be administered in an unbiased way and without regard to one's individual beliefs. Further, though people may disagree about other issues surrounding sexual orientation or gender identity, we feel that in these specific instances, there is a consensus that individuals of different sexual orientations or gender identities are no less deserving of the services that HUD provides.

Americans of all sexual orientations and gender identities pay into and notwithstanding are inherently entitled to fair treatment and equal access to the programs that HUD administers. The United States is a pluralistic society, one that embraces differences of opinions but treats all of its citizens fairly and equally.

As a municipal body, our commission is particularly concerned about the limitations on municipalities to enact and enforce particular types of statutes in light of the United States' unique distribution of power among the local, state and federal levels of government. Our commission believes that this proposed rule would enable municipalities to protect its citizens and ensure they are treated fairly and equally in a way that might otherwise be precluded.

We strongly endorse the adoption of the proposed rule.

On Behalf of the Commission,

Nathaniel H. Goetz
Chairman, Human Relations Commission
City of Durham, North Carolina

Steven D. Lee
Human Relations Commissioner
City of Durham, North Carolina